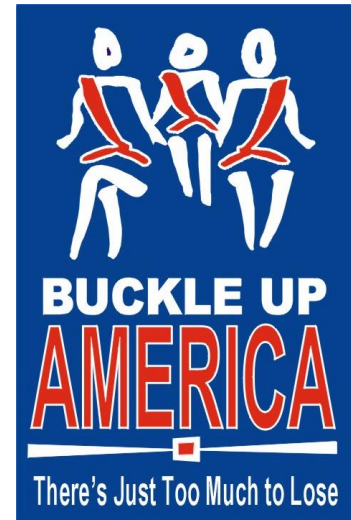


BUILDING A SAFE COMMUNITY... BUCKLE UP ACTION PLAN

*...a Safe Community partners' action
guide for increasing safety belt use.*



Safe Community Buckle Up Action Plan

It's a fact. On America's roads, someone is killed every 13 minutes and someone is injured every nine seconds on America's roadways. It only takes seconds to buckle up and yet many motorists and passengers don't repeat this life-saving step every day as they travel on our community's roadways. Safe Community partners are faced with many challenges in boosting belt use... "How do we get and sustain community support for safety belt enforcement and education programs?" "How do we obtain community leader support for our efforts? How do we get the community involved and supportive of our safety belt campaign? "How do we demonstrate that there was a significant and sustained change in behavior?" "Is the community better served as a result of our efforts?" The seven-step action plan for Buckling Up Your Safe Community, is designed to answer these questions.

The most successful safety belt campaigns incorporate seven specific action steps:

- ❑ **Pre-Survey and Community Rollout**
- ❑ **Community Leader Support**
- ❑ **Area Briefings and Community Pledges**
- ❑ **Media**
- ❑ **Training**
- ❑ **Periodic Enforcement Waves**
- ❑ **Post Survey and Community Celebration**

Why occupant protection enforcement and education?

Safety belt and child safety seat enforcement saves lives, reduces injuries, and cuts health-care costs. In addition, national studies have concluded that high visibility traffic enforcement continues to be the most effective strategy to reduce crime. When citizens understand that law enforcement is serious about enforcing occupant protection laws---and actually witness officers enforcing those laws---they are more likely to use their safety belts and buckle up their children. As with any program, strong leadership is a cornerstone in ensuring successful implementation. The **Safe Communities Buckle Up Action Plan** provides a one-year road map for local coalitions on improving the safety of motorists and suppressing crime within the community.

Conduct Pre-Surveys and Community Rollout

Getting a baseline survey of your community's safety belt use rates is the first step in getting your campaign underway. Get your Safe Community coalition members involved in conducting informal surveys of safety belt use. Solicit assistance from other volunteers at colleges and universities, traffic safety advocacy groups, and public health/medical institutions. Pre-surveys will be conducted prior to the implementation of your Safe Communities Buckle Up campaign and post surveys conducted after key enforcement waves. Observations should be focused on driver safety belt use from traffic corners with signals or stop signs. The surveyor should view 100 drivers at each location and check "yes or no" on the form. (See the sample survey form.) The surveys should be conducted during daylight hours and on weekdays and weekends. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to proceed, but you should observe at least 100 vehicles at a few locations in your community. The following guidelines are recommended for informal surveys:

1. Give one person at each site overall responsibility for the operation. Seek someone with good organizational skills and knowledge about basic statistical techniques.
2. Conduct a survey to establish a baseline rate, so you can measure your progress and success.
3. Select locations for collection data near proposed areas of enforcement or safety checkpoints.
4. Include neighborhoods with largely minority populations in your survey; get volunteers from these areas to serve as surveyors. Fraternities and sororities, church groups, and minority advocacy organizations may provide willing volunteers.
5. Determine the best times to collect data and how many observations are needed for credible survey. Collecting data on several dates will give a better "snapshot" of actual use.
6. Assign staff to serve as data collectors and instruct them on how to collect the data efficiently. Make sure their actions are passive and do not cause a traffic bottleneck that delays or interferes with travel.
7. Collect, tabulate, and analyze data. Report your results at a Safe Communities Area Briefing and BUA Proclamation Signing.

What's a Community Rollout?

The Community Rollout is probably your first event to inform the public on the results of your survey and the need to address safety belt use in your community. Ask the Mayor to support the community's efforts to increase safety belt use by issuing a proclamation for all citizens to Buckle Up. Set a usage goal and communicate it extensively throughout the community for several weeks before conducting another survey. Host an unveiling of donated signage or billboard in close proximity to City Hall that denotes the current seat belt usage and your community's progress in increasing safety belt use.



Getting Community Leader Support

Community leader support serves as the foundation of your Safe Community Coalitions' Buckle Up Campaign, moving the community toward a common cause—saving lives and reducing injuries through a concentrated effort to increase safety belt use. There are several benefits for community leaders in supporting your safety belt campaign:

- Provides a platform for public information and awareness
- Rallies political leadership around safety issues
- Fosters community buy-in for safety initiatives
- Provides a positive image for public servants who have demonstrated support for public safety

Step 1 - Find A Champion

Make a commitment to meet with the chief executive or primary elected officials in your community to discuss the epidemic of traffic injuries and fatalities. Have on hand supporting data, such as the number of injuries and fatalities and cost of traffic crashes in your community, along with comparative national, state, or other neighboring community statistics. Once the support of key political figures is obtained, that support should be used to enlist other key leaders in the community. As a Safe Community Coalition, elected officials and community leaders rely upon your knowledge and expertise regarding injury prevention initiatives.

Encourage the enlistment of champions such as the mayor, city council president, judiciary, business and community leaders, and insurance industry representatives. It is important to seek reputable and influential individuals or groups in an effort to add validation and strength to your support base. At this point, the resource pool should not exceed four or five key leaders, who are drawn from different segments of the community. It must be stressed that these leaders use their influence to attract other supporters and resources.

Step 2 - Champion Strategy Session and Planning for Community-Wide Area Briefing

Invite your community champions to an informal briefing to discuss solutions or strategies to address the “epidemic of motor vehicle crashes” use in your community and showcase the **Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign**. Be sure that representatives of local law enforcement agencies participate in the initial strategy session. Ideally they should serve as your spokespersons on the value of safety belt enforcement and relationship to suppression of crime. Gain commitments to support, sponsor and conduct a community-wide area briefing.





Mobilizing the Community to Buckle Up

Your first step in mobilizing the community toward achieving higher safety belt use rates lies in building a solid foundation of community partnerships. Mobilizing the community begins when-

- needed community changes are identified;
- political leaders and the public are concerned about a problem and voice a need for collaboration to address their traffic safety problem; and,
- concerned citizens organize to take a stand and implement solutions.

Area Briefings

Highway safety advocates have used a variety of strategies to gain the attention of the citizenry and public officials in support a specific issue. Town meetings, editorial boards, community talk shows, and media events all serve as a means for acquiring the community's commitment toward resolving a specific traffic safety problem. The **Safe Communities Buckle Up Action Plan** utilizes formal "area briefings" to introduce the problem, showcase successful programs, and to gain a commitment from key political leaders and gatekeepers to increase safety belt use in their community. The "area briefings" evolved as a critical component of a statewide safety belt enforcement strategy developed by the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety. Georgia's approach utilized the "area briefing" concept as a mechanism for garnering support from the Mayor's Office, city council representatives, county commissioners, legislators, Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs, CEOs from large private companies, government agency representatives, and representatives of minority organizations. Their collective goal --- to mobilize community efforts around safety belts.

Topics at each briefing included the status of occupant protection usage, the motor vehicle crash problem, economic and health care costs of not wearing safety belts, benefits of safety belt use, impact of safety belt enforcement on crime in the community, safety belt use and minority populations, and successful strategies that increase safety belt use.

Who Calls the First Meeting?

To ensure the success of your area briefing, have a civic official issue the invitation. Send a letter from the official (Honorary Chairperson) to your invitees including a brief fax-back RSVP. Mail letters of invitation well in advance. Follow up with a phone call to key officials at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Ask the sponsoring official and other dignitaries to give brief welcoming remarks to the audience.

Bringing the Community Together

Before you schedule the first area briefing, you should secure the following commitments:

- the Mayor's Office, a community leader or public official to sponsor the area briefing and to be recognized as the Honorary Chairperson at the meeting.
- a corporate sponsor to provide resources for a luncheon---insurance companies, automobile dealerships, or large private companies are willing supporters of traffic safety initiatives.
- an invitation list including community leaders, state and local elected officials, activists, decision-makers/policymakers, agency heads, and the media. These are individuals who are critical to the success of your safety belt enforcement efforts.
- a good source of state and local traffic injury data (State Highway Safety Office or local traffic engineer).
- media contacts to cover the first rollout of the **Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign**. Whether by invitation or special media advisory, all local media outlets should be invited. Don't overlook editorial writers and local columnists.

How Can the Community Support Your Buckle Up Campaign?

Gaining community-level commitments often involves coordinating resources with various community groups. Law enforcement agencies can conduct safety checkpoints. Members of the private sector can provide donations for billboards and incentives (cups, key chains) or sponsor a luncheon. Local health agencies can assist with child safety seat checks at safety checkpoints. Insurance companies can provide valuable support in educating the public and their subscribers on the benefits of safety belt usage. Remember---the media is an important partner in getting the word out on your **Safe Community's Buckle Up Campaign**. When building a relationship with other groups, be sure to agree on the division of labor. Decide which joint objectives you want to accomplish and what specific steps you can take to accomplish those objectives.

Don't Forget to Inform the Public

Although the "area briefing" serves as an important opportunity to unify community efforts, your partnership efforts must include consistent communication and feedback between Safe Community partners and the citizenry. Organize public information and education strategies that provide the public with awareness of the importance of safety belts and safety belt enforcement efforts in your community. This can be accomplished by conducting media events and community forums with civic clubs, neighborhood associations, and special interest groups. This step is particularly important in working with minority communities that may have legitimate concerns about harassment issues.

Communication will forge more open and receptive attitudes among the community-at-large. With the public standing beside you, a true sense of community evolves that energizes your campaign; community leaders emerge in support of your enforcement efforts; and concerned citizens are ready to be a part of the solution!

Finding the Hook for the Media

How do you encourage the news media to cover your activities? Every press event needs to capture the media's attention. Avoid the use of "talking heads" against an institutional backdrop. Take the media on-site and outside whenever possible and provide meaningful visuals. Many times, a picture is worth a thousand words. Your event might be a safety festival at a local hospital, a special event unveiling a law enforcement wave, a safety checkpoint, a child safety seat clinic, celebrities joining public officials at a rally, or a new mascot named. The possibilities are endless – and the more interesting the hook, the stronger the news coverage.

Beyond Talking Heads

In addition to planned media events, other media relations activities may include:

- Organize a "kick-off" event with the Mayor and other elected officials for your first enforcement wave
- Use celebrity spokespersons to attract greater media attention
- Schedule editorial board meetings, meet with key reporters, and invite them to participate in your efforts
- Set up a mock "crash scene" (created by emergency medical technicians) at a checkpoint to give a visual to the event
- Hold a press conference at a hospital emergency department with doctors and nurses who treat crash victims

Enforcement waves (held as part of your Community Buckle Up Campaign) provide strong potential as a media event. The procedures used to garner media coverage of this event serve as a useful model for other media events. Prior to the enforcement wave:

1. Phone local reporters and notify them that you will be providing them with the details of an upcoming enforcement wave.
2. Prepare a written press release or media advisory giving the "who, what, when, where and why's" of the enforcement and make the appropriate law enforcement and municipal officials available for interviews.
3. Suggest to the reporters that they could interview citizens at the roadblock, in addition to participating officers. Following the wave, invite the media to a news briefing to announce the results of the enforcement effort.

- Issue a challenge to local high schools to increase safety belt use and invite the media to the safety belt awards programs at school assemblies and sports events
- Print pledge card forms in the newspaper urging people to buckle up and encourage the media to spotlight individuals or local groups with the highest return of buckle up pledges
- Publish stories on “Saved by the Belt” crash survivors
- Call or schedule appearances on radio talk shows and community affairs programs
- Host an unveiling of donated signage or a billboard in close proximity to City Hall that denotes the community’s progress in increasing safety belt use. Periodically conduct media conferences throughout the year as your community’s belt use increases.

Use the resources of your community partners to help organize media events. Agencies can solicit participation from other corporate and community organizations. Equally important is the need to provide continual feedback to the community through the media, for example, periodically report on the safety belt use rates in your community and the success of your program. Highlight the contributions of other partners at press events with special award presentations. Partnering with the media is a powerful tool in communicating the payoff of your **Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign**.

Training

Without the full support and participation of the law enforcement community, the general public will not be convinced to buckle up. Occupant protection enforcement is only as successful as the leadership and community buy-in associated with specific program(s). Law enforcement officials must be able to effectively convey the importance of occupant protection enforcement programs to other law enforcement agencies, their partners, and officers. This is possible only through proper training.

Training is the cornerstone to implementation of an effective enforcement program. It provides “information and motivation,” which leads to “confidence and involvement” in those being trained. Every enforcement official as well as members of the local government, the judiciary, etc. must be trained on the specifics of your Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign as well.

NHTSA Sponsored Training

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed three formal training programs to educate police officers concerning the special risks they face in driving and the consequences of not using safety belts. These curricula are designed to motivate officers to use their safety belts and to increase their enforcement of occupant protection laws.

- ***The TOPS Program (Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies)***

The TOPS curriculum replaces NHTSA’s Occupant Protection Usage and Enforcement (OPUE) course developed in 1990. Officers are provided various strategies to increase occupant protection enforcement, community outreach, including advocacy issues and resource management.

- ***Operation Kids***

A collaborative effort developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). This workshop is designed to encourage law enforcement officers to take a more personal, active role regarding their responsibilities in promoting child passenger safety through enhanced enforcement and community education efforts. Operation Kids can be taught in a 4-hour, 8-hour, or 2-day format.

- ***Mobilizing America to Buckle Up Children***

A workshop intended for field law enforcement officers and is designed to increase awareness levels and enthusiasm for enforcement. Upon completion of the curriculum, officers will be able to better identify child passenger safety violations, make more stops and take appropriate enforcement actions. It is available in a 15-minute format, 1-2 hour classroom exercise and presentation, or a 4-hour interactive seminar.

Model Enforcement Campaign

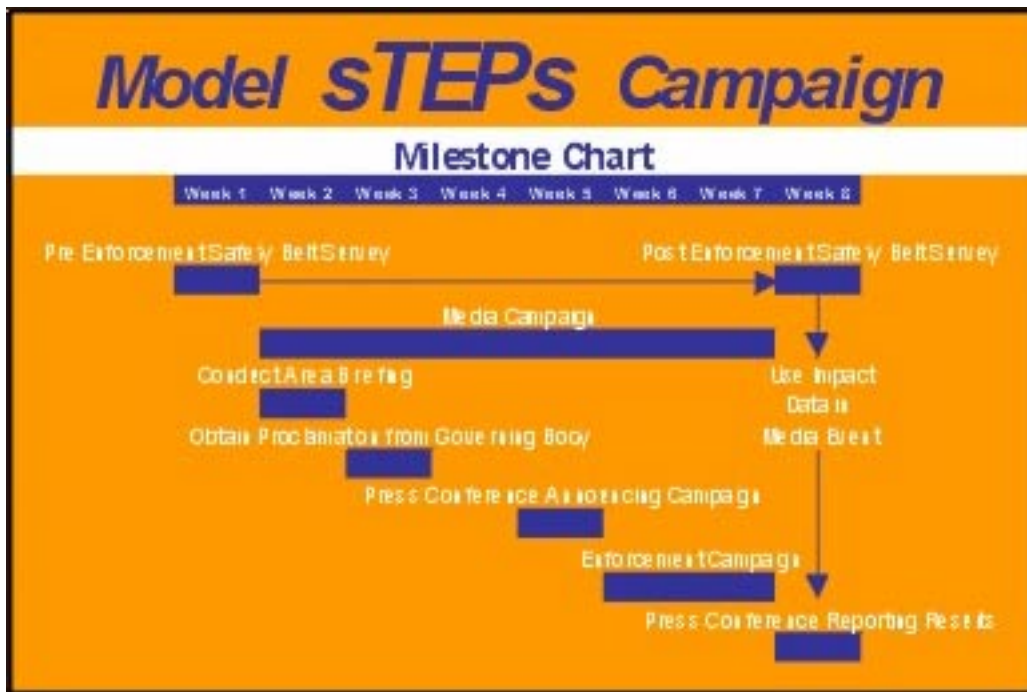
The most critical component of your **Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign** is enforcement of safety belt and child passenger safety laws. Enforcement is central to achieving a significant increase in safety belt use in large measure because of the nature of

the motoring public. It appears that society is roughly divided into thirds regarding their attitude about safety belt use. One third buckle up on their own because it's the right and common sense thing to do. The second third will comply as a result of education and because it's the law. The last third will only comply when they perceive that failing to do so will likely result in a trip to traffic court. It is clear that the national goal of an 85% safety belt usage rate by the end of the year 2000 cannot be met without the full cooperation and commitment of the law enforcement community.

It is clear, that the national goal of an 85% safety belt usage rate by the end of the Labor Day 2000 cannot be met without the full cooperation and commitment of the law enforcement community.

Linking Your Safe Community with Law Enforcement Agencies

Your Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign should be closely linked to the enforcement community. Solicit law enforcement support as spokespersons; jointly plan your education and media plans to coincide with waves of safety belt enforcement; encourage your local agencies to implement multi-jurisdictional enforcement campaigns bringing together state and local agencies. How do we link with law enforcement? Most Safe Communities organize an enforcement sub-committee with representation from the state and local agencies. If a local Community Traffic Safety Program has already established an enforcement planning group, solicit their support in planning your campaign. ***Remember---High visibility enforcement in coordination with an earned media campaign and new partnerships will increase safety belt use!***



The above chart illustrates the model enforcement plan for your Safe Community Buckle Up Campaign. Waves of enforcement should be designed to complement national initiatives such as *Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children*. Operation ABC Mobilization is an ongoing national safety initiative to increase safety belt use and save the lives of Americans. It is co-sponsored and organized by the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and is part of the *Buckle Up America* Campaign. Be sure to schedule law enforcement waves and media events around the four key mobilization periods. For dates email the Safe Communities Service Center at Safe.Communities@nhtsa.dot.gov.

Safe Community Programs Really Work!

Safe Community campaigns combining enforcement with community involvement and public information in Baltimore County, Maryland reduced average number of crashes by 54%; in Greenville, South Carolina motor vehicle injuries were reduced by 12%.

A community campaign in Derry, New Hampshire increased teen seat belt use to over 70% and teen fatalities dropped from to zero.

SAFE Coalition efforts in Kern County, California increased adult safety belt use to 76%; in the 5-18 year old range seat belt use increased 21 percentage points; and correct child safety seat use increased to over 60%.

Shoals 2000 in Muscle Shoals, Alabama increased seat belt use by 14%; overall injuries were reduced by 10.6%.

Imagine what it would be like if your Safe Community Coalition could help stop a nationwide epidemic from devastating your community. The fact is—you can.



Safety Belt Survey

Survey Date: _____ Time: _____ AM / PM

Survey Location: _____

Name of Group Conducting Survey: _____

Indicate a belted or unbelted driver by checking the appropriate block (YES or NO) that correspondes to the vehicle surveyed. Only observational surveys that visually count drivers wearing a safety belt will be accepted.

Driver Safety Belt Use

	YES	NO
1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____
6	_____	_____
7	_____	_____
8	_____	_____
9	_____	_____
10	_____	_____
11	_____	_____
12	_____	_____
13	_____	_____
14	_____	_____
15	_____	_____
16	_____	_____
17	_____	_____
18	_____	_____
19	_____	_____
20	_____	_____
21	_____	_____
22	_____	_____
23	_____	_____
24	_____	_____
25	_____	_____
26	_____	_____
27	_____	_____
28	_____	_____
29	_____	_____
30	_____	_____
31	_____	_____
32	_____	_____
33	_____	_____

Driver Safety Belt Use

	YES	NO
34	_____	_____
35	_____	_____
36	_____	_____
37	_____	_____
38	_____	_____
39	_____	_____
40	_____	_____
41	_____	_____
42	_____	_____
43	_____	_____
44	_____	_____
45	_____	_____
46	_____	_____
47	_____	_____
48	_____	_____
49	_____	_____
50	_____	_____
51	_____	_____
52	_____	_____
53	_____	_____
54	_____	_____
55	_____	_____
56	_____	_____
57	_____	_____
58	_____	_____
59	_____	_____
60	_____	_____
61	_____	_____
62	_____	_____
63	_____	_____
64	_____	_____
65	_____	_____
66	_____	_____

Driver Safety Belt Use

	YES	NO
67	_____	_____
68	_____	_____
69	_____	_____
70	_____	_____
71	_____	_____
72	_____	_____
73	_____	_____
74	_____	_____
75	_____	_____
76	_____	_____
77	_____	_____
78	_____	_____
79	_____	_____
80	_____	_____
81	_____	_____
82	_____	_____
83	_____	_____
84	_____	_____
85	_____	_____
86	_____	_____
87	_____	_____
88	_____	_____
89	_____	_____
90	_____	_____
91	_____	_____
92	_____	_____
93	_____	_____
94	_____	_____
95	_____	_____
96	_____	_____
97	_____	_____
98	_____	_____
99	_____	_____
100	_____	_____

